DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 330 784 CE 055 331

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TITLE California Adult Learner Progress Evaluation Process (CALPEP). California Literacy Campaign (CLC).
PUB DATE 8 Sep 88
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the National Adult Literacy Symposium (Washington, DC, September 8, 1988). For related documents, see CE 055 329-330.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Adult Basic Education; *Adult Literacy; Adult Programs; *Literacy Education; *Measures (Individuals); Program Development; Program Implementation; Reading Habits; Reading Skills; Skill Development; *Student Evaluation; Student Improvement; Test Construction; Tutoring; Writing Skills
IDENTIFIERS *California Literacy Campaign

ABSTRACT

The California Literacy Campaign (CLC) is a statewide, community-oriented, library-based adult literacy program initiated by the California State Library in 1984. A key feature is the latitude given individual sites for developing literacy services to meet the needs of the local population. Two evaluations suggested that current learner progress assessment mechanisms were inadequate and the lack of common procedures limited the information's usefulness at the state level. The Educational Testing Service developed a process to evaluate adult learner progress for CLC literacy programs, called the California Adult Learner Progress Evaluation Process (CALPEP). It evaluates learner progress by examining changes in the learner's reading and writing habits/abilities. CALPEP measures these areas: changes in reading and writing habits; changes in reading and writing levels; progress toward attaining reading and writing goals; changes in learners' perceptions of reading and writing progress; change in work status; and reasons for leaving program. These outcome dimensions are examined initially upon program entrance and every 6 months thereafter. CLC has been successful because of student motivation incorporated into program design. Another important aspect of the program is setting learner goals. CALPEP is in its first field-test year. Data will be gathered to determine its impact on CLC and the need for changes. (YLB)

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CALIFORNIA ADULT LEARNER PROGRESS EVALUATION PROCESS (CALPEP)
California Literacy Campaign (CLC)

A Paper Prepared for the
National Adult Literacy Symposium
National Press Club
Washington, D.C.
September 8, 1988

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CE 055 331

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Who's Learning to Read and
How do We Know?
American Newspaper Publishers Association

Description of the Program

The California Literacy Campaign (CLC) is a statewide community-oriented, library-based adult literacy program initiated by the California State Library (CSL) in 1984. Under the administrative authority of the California Library Services Board (CSLB) and with continued funding from the California Library Services Act, the CLC has grown to 83 programs serving over 15,000 "hard-to-reach" adult learners.

One of the key features of the CLC is the latitude given individual sites for developing literacy services to meet the needs of the local population. Individual literacy programs have been encouraged to establish approaches to literacy development that are appropriate to the unique characteristics of the adult learners they serve. Usually through one-on-one tutoring, volunteer tutors use various approaches and materials in teaching such as: Laubach Way to Reading, Language Experience, Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA), and other commercially developed or locally developed materials.

This approach to implementation was found to be successful in two evaluations, conducted on behalf of the California State Librarian. However, both evaluations also suggested that current mechanisms for assessing adult learner progress were inadequate. Few systematic methods were being used to measure learners' reading and writing abilities. Further, the lack of common procedures for learner progress assessment limited the amount of useful information that could be compiled at the state level.

Recognizing this need, the CSL contracted with Educational Testing Service (ETS) to develop a process to evaluate adult learner progress for literacy programs in the CLC. This procedure was developed to meet the specific needs and guidelines of the CSL. Key elements included the level of the learners, the use of volunteer tutors, and the autonomy of local programs. Specifically, the procedure needed to address the needs of learners who read between the 0-4 level (e.g., pre-ABE learner). The process had to be implemented via a volunteer service delivery system. Finally, the procedure could not mandate a particular curriculum or methodology for teaching adults, but must guarantee local programs the autonomy to choose their own instructional materials and teaching methods.

In addition to reading, writing was also to be included in the literacy evaluation of learners in the CLC. Based on these program guidelines, ETS developed an adult learner progress evaluation procedure that will be discussed at length in the next section.

Who's Learning to Read and How do We Know?

The program determines learner progress with an innovative procedure titled the California Adult Learner Progress Evaluation Process (CALPEP). This system -- developed by ETS -- evaluates learner progress by examining changes in the learner's reading and writing habits/abilities (a complete copy is enclosed). This process does not use traditional standardized tests and does not measure learners' progress in terms of grade level equivalencies, but rather examines changes in learners' reading and writing habits, learner perceptions of reading and writing progress, and goal attainment.

CALPEP is not a competency-based assessment procedure, since setting standard competencies for all learners in the CLC was not the intent of CALPEP. For example, a survey of the goals of learners in the CLC found that most goals were related to reading prose materials (e.g., the bible, reading stories to children, pleasure reading). Thus, CALPEP was designed to monitor learner's progress in reading and writing prose-related materials. The following are the areas that CALPEP measures:

* change in reading habits
* change in writing habits
* change in reading levels (using the CLC Description of Reading Levels form as a guide)
* change in writing levels (using the CLC Description of Writing Levels form as a guide)
* progress towards attaining learners' reading goals
* progress towards attaining learners' writing goals
* changes in learners' perception regarding their reading progress
* changes in learners' perception regarding their writing progress
* changes in work status
* reasons for leaving program (follow-up)

Changes in reading habits. The reading assessment section of CALPEP includes two parts. The first part examines how often the learner reads items from a list of commonly read materials (based on a CLC survey) and how difficult the learner finds it to read these materials. The second half of this question asks how much time learners read in a typical week (outside the tutoring session).

Changes in writing habits. The writing section also includes two parts. The first part examines how often the learner writes items from a list of materials (based on a CLC survey) and how difficult the learner finds writing these materials. The second half asks how much time learners write in a typical week (outside the tutoring session).

Changes in reading and writing levels. The learner evaluation procedure was designed not to "drive" any particular curriculum or methodology. Therefore, the progress measure needed to be generic to accommodate the various methods and materials in use by the 83 programs. As a result of this need to be flexible, ETS developed a generic set of reading and writing levels that could track progress over time. The reading levels begin at the basic level of understanding/identifying letters ("R" level), then proceeds to recognizing words ("W" level), continuing on to reading and understanding sentences ("S" level), paragraphs ("P" level), and finally applying reading abilities to other areas in the life of the learner ("A").

The writing levels are similar, yet reflect the difference between reading and writing. For example, the learner is at the "R" level if he or she can write letters, and the "W" level if they can write words. To be at the "S" level, the learner needs to be able to write a sentence forming a complete thought. Similarly, the "P" level requires that the learner write a series of related sentences to form a paragraph. The "A" level is reached when the learner can write for different purposes and in different contexts.

A complete description of the CLC Reading and Writing Levels is included in the CALPEP package.

Progress towards attaining reading and writing goals. At the initial tutoring session, the tutor and learner discuss reading and writing goals; subsequent sessions are devoted to instruction related to these goals. Because of this goal orientation, goal attainment was included as a progress measure in CALPEP. Additionally, CALPEP not only identifies goals attained,

but also specifies the CLC Reading and Writing level at which the goal was reached (i.e., "R" level, "W" level, etc.).

Changes in learners' perceptions of reading and writing progress. Involving learners in their own evaluation is the rationale for including these items in CALPEP. Selected quotes (commonly used by adult learners when describing their reading and writing progress to program staff) are presented to the learner. Learners select which quote best describes them and changes in learners' perception of their reading and writing abilities are noted.

Change in work status. Many learners come for tutoring to increase their skills for job-related reasons. CALPEP includes questions about how the tutoring sessions have impacted the job status of the learners -- did they get a job, promotion, etc.

Reasons for leaving program. Finally, because of the open entry/exit nature of the program, some learners leave unannounced. However, it is important to know why learners leave the program. Therefore, a question on the Semiannual Tutor Report asks tutors to indicate the learner's reasons for leaving the program, if known.

The above CALPEP outcome dimensions are examined initially when the learner enters the program, and again every six months with both tutors and learners reviewing the CALPEP areas and completing the Semiannual Tutor report. Tutors and learners keep ongoing records on progress made during tutoring sessions on a Tutor/Learner Progress Log.

Tutor Training

Tutors are trained in the use of CALPEP at the local CLC program site before being matched with adult learners. In addition to training on CALPEP, tutors learn goal setting strategies. They are also introduced to the program methodology and materials to be used for the tutoring sessions.

What has Worked Best/What Hasn't Worked?

Since this a field test year, there are no data as to what works and what does not work. These data will become available after the field test year -- June 1989.

Motivation for students

There are various reasons why the CLC has been successful. The one-on-one nature of the service delivery system is indeed one motivating force for learners who have not been successful in "classroom type" arrangements. The open entry/exit nature of the program relieves any scheduling pressures that the learner may have, while also reinforcing the volunteer nature of their attendance -- in essence adults participate because they have decided to do so. Also, being a library-based program, it is considered non-threatening and non-judgmental whereas, in some cases, school/classroom based programs tend to revive negative memories of school for this learner population.

Knowing What Students Want to Accomplish

Adults seek tutoring for a number of reasons. Identifying those reasons is important for the instructional component as well as keeping the learner motivated to continue attending the sessions. Therefore, setting learner

goals is a very important aspect of the program. During the initial tutoring sessions, the tutor and learner discuss the goals that will be worked on over the course of months. These goals are noted down on a CALPEP form, and progress toward attaining the goal is noted on the Tutor/Learner Progress Log. After six months, current levels of the goals are noted on the Semiannual report and comparisons are made between the initial level of the goal and six-month level to determine progress.

Effect of Assessment Data on Program

The learner progress evaluation process is in its first field test year, therefore it is difficult to determine the impact it will have on the CLC programs. Data will be gathered on learner reading and writing habits, progress towards attaining their goals, changes in their perceptions of their progress, and changes in their job status. These data can give project staff a general sense of how participation in the program has affected learners' daily lives at home and at work.

Learner Follow-up

One item on the Semiannual Tutor Report addresses the issue of learner attrition. Specifically, tutors are asked to determine why learners have left the program. Tutors are also asked to keep track of learners on a monthly basis using the Tutor Monthly Report. Any changes in the learners address, phone number, locations of tutoring sessions, as well as information about learner dropout or referral to other program, are to be noted on this monthly form.

Articulation with Local Support Groups

Many of the CLC programs have ongoing relationships with local community organizations, businesses, job training groups, and educational institutions. In some cases, if learners might be better served by these organizations, they are referred to them.

Future Learner Assessment

Data from the field test year will be examined to determine if changes to CALPEP need to be made. There are plans to develop a statewide computerized data base system that will allow local programs to input data from CALPEP onto a microcomputer located in the CLC office. The information on the computer could be transferred onto a floppy disk and sent to the California State Library for further analysis.